

A PARABLE ON DISCRIMINATION FOR MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY

(Is a Zebra a white animal with black stripes or a black animal with white stripes? This poem by Adelaide Field Cummings which I've adapted may help you.)

There once was a Zebra whose friends called her "Emma."
Hers was a problem, a major dilemma.
It ran through her brain like a train on its track --
"Do you think I am white; Or could I be black?"
For a month on the plain in rain and in sun,
she was hoping in vain that her colors would run.
Perhaps they would melt, and merge into one!
Undaunted, she retired to the glade where she prayed
that the shade would cause them to fade.
She was so dismayed when, unwanted, they stayed.
She glared at her limbs. What she saw didn't suit her.
"Maybe I'm hybrid -- a sort of a neuter.
I'm not quite a horse. I'm not quite a donkey.
The whites call me 'nigger', and the blacks call me 'honkey!'
Oh dear, what a problem, what a terrible jam!
Can't you see, friends, I don't know who I am!"

Then spoke the Owl. (He has very large eyes,
and everyone knows that his judgments are wise.)
"Why do you think that your stripes are a blight?
It seems to me, Emma, your conclusions aren't right.
We all like the daytime, but we all need the night.
Your stripes are not ugly; they are not unrelated.
Can't you see, Emma -- you are integrated!"
He stopped to draw breath, and in that moment's pause,
the whole forest rang with cheers and applause.
Now Emma's happy; her heart is through breaking.
Her problems she sees were of her own making.

The lesson's the same, for the whale or the squid;
We are each of us blessed with our very own "id."
Now Emma romps through the forest and all hear her say,
"I am what I am -- and I like it that way!"